

REMARKS**Pending Claims**

In this application, claims 1-3 and 4-19 are currently pending. Claim 1 is amended herein. All other claims depend, directly or indirectly, from claim 1 and are thereby amended as well. Entry of these amendments is respectfully requested.

Art Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-2, 5-8, 10-17, and 19 as being anticipated by Arndt (6,134,476). The Examiner has rejected claims 3 and 18 as being obvious in light of Arndt in view of Berube (6,245,062).

Claim 1 recites "means for bracing the inner conductor in relation to the outer conductor in such a way that the inner conductor is under tensile stress and the outer conductor is under compression stress". The Applicant notes that this recitation is supported, for example on page 5, lines 14-17, where one embodiment is described that features an inner conductor with a screw thread, that is designed to brace the inner conductor with a threaded nut against the first hand portion element. Revolving the threaded nut relative to the male screw head of the inner conductor, the inner conductor (by revolving in a clockwise direction) is forced along its longitudinal axis in a proximal direction.

Since the distal end of the inner conductor is connected to the probe tip by way of screw connection (page 6, lines 24-25), revolving the nut of the hand piece also forces the probe tip in a proximal direction.

The probe end of the probe tip exhibits a stepped outside diameter. Via the stepped outside diameter, the probe tip exerts force on the insulator (page 8 line 33 to page 9, line 8).

Analogously, the insulator exerts force on the outer conductor by way of stepped outside diameter 42a and stepped inside diameter 43a of the shaft electrode (page 9, line 9-18). Since the hand portion has a stepped longitudinal bore and the proximal end of the outer conductor only extends as far as step 62a, the outer conductor is prevented from moving in a proximal direction. By revolving the screw nut of the hand piece, the inner conductor is therefore braced in relation to the outer conductor in such a way that the inner conductor is under tensile stress and the outer conductor is under compression stress.

The Applicant respectfully submits that neither Arndt nor Berube discloses or suggests "means for bracing the inner conductor in relation to the outer conductor in such a way that the inner conductor is under tensile stress and the outer conductor is under compression stress," as recited in claim 1 and interpreted in light of the teaching of the specification.

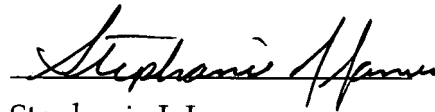
CONCLUSION

All of the claims remaining in this application should now be seen to be in condition for allowance. The prompt issuance of a notice to that effect is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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By their attorneys:

Date:

7/23/07



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